FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

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CHAPTER I.

TWENTY YEARS.

Twenty years ago! Yes, twenty years ago this very day, and there were men among them who remembered it. Only two, however, and these were old men whose day was passed and who would soon be compelled to give up work. Naturally upon this occasion these two were the center figures in the group of talkers who were discussing the topic of the hour.

"Aye," said old Tipton, "I 'member it as well as if it wur yesterday, fur aw it's twenty year' sin'. Eh! but it wur cowd! Th' cowdest neet i' th' winter, an' th' winter wur a bad un. Th' snow wur two foot deep. Theer wur a big rush o' work, an' we'd had to keep th' foires goin' arter midneet. Theer wur a chap workin' then by th' name o' Bob Latham,—he's dead long sin',—an' he went to th' foundry-door to look out. Yo' know how some chaps is about seein' how cowd it is, or how hot, or how heavy th' rain's comin' down. Well, he wur one o' them soart, an' he mun go an' tak' a look out at th' snow.

"'Coom in, tha foo',' sez I to him. 'Whatten tha stickin' tha thick yed out theer fur, as if it wur midsummer, i'stead o' being cowd enow to freeze th' tail off a brass jackass. Coom in wi' tha.'

"'Aye,' he sez, a-chatterin' his teeth, 'it is cowd sure-ly. It's enow to stiffen a mon.'

"'I wish it ud stiffen thee,' I sez, 'so as we mought set thee up as a monyment at th' front o' th' 'Sylum.'

"An' then aw at onct I heard him gie a jump an' a bit o' a yell, like, under his breath. 'God-a-moighty!' he sez.

"Summat i' th' way he said it soart o' wakkened me.

"'What's up?' I sez.

"'Coom here,' sez he. 'Theer's a dead lad here.'

"An' when I getten to him, sure enow I thowt he wur reet. Drawed up i' a heap nigh th' door theer *wur* a lad lyin' on th' snow, an' th' stiff look on him mowt ha' gi'en ony mon a turn.

"Latham wur bendin' ower him, wi' his teeth chatterin'.

"'Blast thee!' I sez, 'why dost na tha lift him?'

"Betwixt us we did lift him, an' carry him into th' Works an' laid him down nigh one o' the furnaces, an' th' fellys coom crowdin' round to look at him. He wur a lad about nine year' owd, an' strong built; but he looked more than half clemmed, an' arter we'st rubbed him a good bit an' getten him warmed enow to coom round 'i a manner, th' way he set up an' stared round were summat queer.

"'Mesters,' he sez, hoarse an' shaky, 'ha' ony on yo' getten a bit o' bread?'

"Bob Latham's missus had put him up summat to eat, an' he browt it an' gie it to him. Well, th' little chap a'most snatched it, an' crammed it into his mouth i' great mouthfuls. His honds trembled so he could scarce howd th' meat an' bread, an' in a bit us as wur standin' lookin' on seed him soart o' choke, as if he wnr goin' to cry; but he swallyed it down, and did na.

"'I havn't had nowt to eat i' a long time,' sez he.

"'How long?' sez I.

"Seemt like he thowt it ower a bit afore he answered, and then he sez:

"'I think it mun ha' been four days.'

"'Wheer are yo' fro'?' one chap axed.

"'I coom a long way,' he sez. 'I've bin on th' road three week'.' An' then he looks up sharp. 'I run away fro' th' Union,' he sez.

"That wur th' long an' short on it—he had th' pluck to run away fro' th' Union, an' he'd had th' pluck to stond out agen

clemmin' an' freezin' until flesh an' blood ud howd out no longer, an' he'd fell down at the foundry-door.

"'I seed th' loight o' th' furnaces,' he sez, 'an' I tried to run; but I went blind an' fell down. I thowt,' he sez, as cool as a cucumber, 'as I wur deein'.'

"Well, we kep' him aw neet an' took him to th' mester i' th' mornin', an' th' mester gie him a place, an' he stayed. An' he's bin i' th' foundry fro' that day to this, an' how he's worked an' gotten on yo' see for yoresens—fro' beein' at ivvery one's beck an' call to buyin' out Flixton an' settin' up for hissen. It's the 'Haworth Iron Works' fro' to-day on, an' he will na mak' a bad mester, eyther."

"Nay, he will na," commented another of the old ones. "He's a pretty rough chap, but he'll do—will Jem Haworth."

There was a slight confused movement in the group.

"Here he cooms," exclaimed an outsider.

The man who entered the door-way—a strongly built fellow, whose handsome clothes sat rather ill on his somewhat uncouth body—made his way through the crowd with small ceremony. He met the glances of the workmen with a rough nod, and went straight to the managerial desk. But he did not sit down; he stood up, facing those who waited as if he meant to dispose of the business in hand as directly as possible.

"Well, chaps," he said, "here we are."

A slight murmur, as of assent, ran through the room.

"Aye, mester," they said; "here we are."

"Well," said he, "you know why, I suppose. We're taking a fresh start, and I've something to say to you. I've had my say here for some time; but I've not had my way, and now the time's come when I *can* have it. Hang me, but I'm going to have the biggest place in England, and the best place, too. 'Haworth's' sha'n't be second to none. I've set my mind on that. I said I'd stand here some day,"—with a blow on the desk,—"and here I am. I said I'd make my way, and I've done it. From to-day on, this here's 'Haworth's,' and to

show you I mean to start fair and square, if there's a chap here that's got a grievance, let that chap step out and speak his mind to Jem Haworth himself. Now's his time." And he sat down.

There was another stir and murmur, this time rather of consultation; then one of them stepped forward.

"Mester," he said, "I'm to speak fur 'em." Haworth nodded.

"What I've getten to say," said the man, "is said easy. Them as thowt they'd getten grievances is willin' to leave the settlin' on 'em to Jem Haworth."

"That's straight enough," said Haworth. "Let 'em stick to it and there's not a chap among 'em sha'n't have his chance. Go into Greyson's room, lads, and drink luck to 'Haworth's.' Tipton and Harrison, you wait a bit."

Tipton and Harrison lingered with some degree of timidity. By the time the room had emptied itself, Haworth seemed to have fallen into a reverie. He leaned back in his chair, his hands in his pockets, and stared gloomily before him. The room had been silent five minutes before he aroused himself with a start. Then he leaned forward and beckoned to the two, who came and stood before him.

"You two were in the place when I came," he said. "You"—to Tipton—"were the fellow as lifted me from the snow."

"Aye, mester," was the answer, "twenty year' ago, toneet."

"The other fellow——"

"Dead! Eh! Long sin'. Ivvery chap as wur theer, dead an' gone, but me an' him," with a jerk toward his comrade.

Haworth put his hand in his vest-pocket and drew forth a crisp piece of paper, evidently placed there for a purpose.

"Here," he said with some awkwardness, "divide that between you."

"Betwixt us two!" stammered the old man. "It's a ten-pun-note, mester!"

"Yes," with something like shamefacedness. "I used to say to myself when I was a youngster that every chap who was

in the Works that night should have a five-pound note to-day. Get out, old lads, and get as drunk as you please. I've kept my word. But—" his laugh breaking off in the middle —"I wish there'd been more of you to keep it up together."

Then they were gone, chuckling in senile delight over their good luck, and he was left alone. He glanced round the room—a big, handsome one, well filled with massive office furniture, and yet wearing the usual empty, barren look.

"It's taken twenty years," he said, "but I've done it. It's *done*—and yet there isn't as much of it as I used to think there would be."

He rose from his chair and went to the window to look out, rather impelled by restlessness than any motive. The prospect, at least, could not have attracted him. The place was closed in by tall and dingy houses, whose slate roofs shone with the rain which drizzled down through the smoky air. The ugly yard was wet and had a deserted look; the only living object which caught his eye was the solitary figure of a man who stood waiting at the iron gates.

At the sight of this man, he started backward with an exclamation.

"The devil take the chap!" he said. "There he is again!"

He took a turn across the room, but he came back again and looked out once more, as if he found some irresistible fascination in the sight of the frail, shabbily clad figure.

"Yes," he said, "it's him, sure enough. I never saw another fellow with the same, done-for look. I wonder what he wants."

He went to the door and opening it spoke to a man who chanced to be passing.

"Floxham come in here," he said. Floxham was a well-oiled and burly fellow, plainly fresh from the engine-room. He entered without ceremony, and followed his master to the window. Haworth pointed to the man at the gate.

"There's a chap," he said, "that I've been running up against, here and there, for the last two months. The fellow seems to spend his time wandering up and down the streets. I'm hanged if he don't make me think of a ghost. He goes against the grain with me, somehow. Do you know who he is, and what's up with him?"

Floxham glanced toward the gate-way, and then nodded his head dryly.

"Aye," he answered. "He's th' inventin' chap as has bin thirty year' at work at some contrapshun, an' hasn't browt it to a yed yet. He lives i' our street, an' me an' my missis hes been noticin' him fur a good bit. He'll noan finish th' thing he's at. He's on his last legs now. He took th' contrapshun to 'Merica thirty year' ago, when he first getten th' idea into his yed, an' he browt it back a bit sin' a'most i' the same fix he took it. Me an' my missis think he's a bit soft i' the yed."

Haworth pushed by him to get nearer the window. A slight moisture started out upon his forehead.

"Thirty year'!" he exclaimed. "By the Lord Harry!"

There might have been something in his excitement which had its effect upon the man who stood outside. He seemed, as it were, to awaken slowly from a fit of lethargy. He glanced up at the window, and moved slowly forward.

"He's made up his mind to come in," said Floxham.

"What does he want?" said Haworth, with a sense of physical uneasiness. "Confound the fellow!" trying to shake off the feeling with a laugh. "What does he want with me—to-day?"

"I can go out an' turn him back," said Floxham.

"No," answered Ilaworth. "You can go back to your work. I'll hear what he has to say. I've naught else to do just now."

Floxham left him, and he went back to the big armchair behind the table. He sat down, and turned over some papers, not rid of his uneasiness even when the door opened, and his visitor came in. He was a tall, slender man

who stooped and was narrow-chested. He was gray, hollow-eyed and haggard. He removed his shabby hat and stood before the table a second, in silence.

"Mr. Haworth?" he said, in a gentle, absent-minded voice. "They told me this was Mr. Haworth's room."

"Yes," he answered, "I'm Haworth."

"I want—" a little hoarsely, and faltering—"to get some work to do. My name is Murdoch. I've spent the last thirty years in America, but I'm a Lancashire man. I went to America on business—which has not been successful—yet. I—I have worked here before,"—with a glance around him,—"and I should like to work here again. I did not think it would be necessary, but—that doesn't matter. Perhaps it will only be temporary. I must get work."

In the last sentence his voice faltered more than ever. He seemed suddenly to awaken and bring himself back to his first idea, as if he had not intended to wander from it.

"I—I must get work," he repeated.

The effect he produced upon the man he appealed to was peculiar. Jem Haworth almost resented his frail appearance. He felt it an uncomfortable thing to confront just at this hour of his triumph. He had experienced the same sensation, in a less degree, when he rose in the morning and looked out of his window upon murky sky and falling rain. He would almost have given a thousand pounds for clear, triumphant sunshine.

And yet, in spite of this, he was not quite as brusque as usual when he made his answer.

"I've heard of you," he said. "You've had ill luck."

Stephen Murdoch shifted his hat from hand to hand.

"I don't know," he replied, slowly. "I've not called it that yet. The end has been slow, but I think it's sure. It will come some——"

Haworth made a rough gesture.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you given the thing up yet?"

Murdoch fell back a pace, and stared at him in a stunned way.

"Given it up!" he repeated. "Yet?"

"Look here!" said Haworth. "You'd better do it, if you haven't. Take my advice, and have done with it. You're not a young chap, and if a thing's a failure after thirty years' work——" He stopped, because he saw the man trembling nervously. "Oh, I didn't mean to take the pluck out of you," he said bluntly, a moment later. "You must have had plenty of it to begin with, egad, or you'd never have stood it this long."

"I don't know that it was pluck,"—still quivering. "I've lived on it so long that it would not give *me* up. I think that's it."

Haworth dashed off a couple of lines on a slip of paper, and tossed it to him.

"Take that to Greyson," he said, "and you'll get your work, and if you have anything to complain of, come to me."

Murdoch took the paper, and held it hesitatingly.

"I—perhaps I ought not to have asked for it to-day," he said, nervously. "I'm not a business man, and I didn't think of it. I came in because I saw you. I'm going to London to-morrow, and shall not be back for a week."

"That's all right," said Haworth. "Come then."

He was not sorry to see his visitor turn away, after uttering a few simple words of thanks. It would be a relief to see the door close after him. But when it had closed, to his discomfiture it opened again. The thin, poorly clad figure reappeared.

"I heard in the town," said the man, his cheek flushing faintly, "of what has happened here to-day. Twenty years have brought you better luck than thirty have brought me."

"Yes," answered Haworth, "my luck's been good enough, as luck goes."

"It seems almost a folly"—falling into the meditative tone —"for *me* to wish you good luck in the future." And then,

pulling himself together again as before: "it is a folly; but I wish it, nevertheless. Good luck to you!"

The door closed, and he was gone.

CHAPTER II.

THIRTY YEARS.

A little later there stood at a window, in one of the cheapest of the respectable streets, a woman whom the neighbors had become used to seeing there. She was a small person, with a repressed and watchful look in her eyes, and she was noticeable, also, to the Lancashire mind, for a certain slightly foreign air, not easily described. It was in consequence of inquiries made concerning this foreign air, that the rumor had arisen that she was a "'Merican," and it was possibly a result of this rumor that she was regarded by the inhabitants of the street with a curiosity not unmingled with awe.

"Aye," said one honest matron. "Hoo's a 'Merican, fur my mester heerd it fro' th' landlord. Eh! I would like to ax her summat about th' Blacks an' th' Indians."

But it was not easy to attain the degree of familiarity warranting the broaching of subjects so delicate and truly "'Merican." The stranger and her husband lived a simple and secluded life. It was said the woman had never been known to go out; it seemed her place to stand or sit at the window and watch for the man when he left the house on one of his mysterious errands in company with the wooden case he carried by its iron handle.

This morning she waited as usual, though the case had not gone out,—rather to the disappointment of those interested, whose conjectures concerning its contents were varied and ingenious. When, at last, the tall, stooping figure turned the corner, she went to the door and stood in readiness to greet its crossing the threshold.

Stephen Murdoch looked down at her with a kindly, absent smile.

"Thank you, Kitty," he said. "You are always here, my dear."

There was a narrow, hard, horse-hair sofa in the small room into which they passed, and he went to it and lay down upon it, panting a little in an exhausted way, a hectic red showing itself on his hollow cheeks.

"Everything is ready, Kitty?" he said at last.

"Yes, all ready."

He lay and looked at the fire, still breathing shortly.

"I never was as certain of it before," he said. "I have thought I was certain, but—I never felt as I do now. And yet—I don't know what made me do it—I went into Haworth's this morning and asked for—for work."

His wife dropped the needle she was holding.

"For work!" she said.

"Yes—yes," a little hastily. "I was there and saw Haworth at a window, and there have been delays so often that it struck me I might as well—not exactly depend on it——" He broke off and buried his face in his hands. "What am I saying?" he cried. "It sounds as if I did not believe in it."

His wife drew her chair nearer to him. She was used to the task of consoling him; it had become a habit. She spoke in an even, unemotional voice.

"When Hilary comes——" she began.

"It will be all over then," he said, "one way or the other. He will be here when I come back."

"Yes."

"I may have good news for him," he said. "I don't see"—faltering afresh—"how it can be otherwise. Only I am so used to discouragement—that that I can't see the thing fairly. It has been—a long time, Kitty."

"This man in London," she said, "can tell you the actual truth about it?"

"He is the first mechanic and inventor in England," he answered, his eye sparkling feverishly. "He is a genius. If he says it is a success, it is one."

The woman rose, and going to the fire bent down to stir it. She lingered over it for a moment or so before she came back.

"When the lad comes," he was saying, as if to himself, "we shall have news for him."

Thirty years before, he had reached America, a gentle, unpractical Lancashire man, with a frail physique and empty pockets. He had belonged in his own land to the better class of mechanics; he had a knack of invention which somehow had never as yet brought forth any decided results. He had done one or two things which had gained him the reputation among his employers of being "a clever fellow," but they had always been things which had finally slipped into stronger or shrewder hands, and left his own empty. But at last there had come to him what seemed a new and wonderful thought. He had labored with it in secret, he had lain awake through long nights brooding over it in the darkness.

And then some one had said to him:

"Why don't you try America? America's the place for a thinking, inventing chap like you. It's fellows like you who are appreciated in a new country. Capitalists are not so slow in America. Why don't you carry your traps out there?"

It was more a suggestion of boisterous good-fellowship than anything else, but it awakened new fancies in Stephen Murdoch's mind. He had always cherished vaguely grand visions of the New World, and they were easily excited.

"I only wonder I never thought of it," he said to himself.

He landed on the strange shore with high hopes in his breast, and a little unperfected model in his shabby trunk.

This was thirty years ago, and to-day he was in Lancashire again, in his native town, with the same little model among his belongings.

During the thirty years' interval he had lived an unsettled, unsuccessful life. He had labored faithfully at his task, but he had not reached the end which had been his aim. Sometimes he had seemed very near it, but it had always evaded him. He had drifted here and there bearing his work with him, earning a scant livelihood by doing anything chance threw in his way. It had always been a scant livelihood,—though after the lapse of eight years, in one of his intervals of hopefulness, he had married. On the first night they spent in their new home he had taken his wife into a little bare room, set apart from the rest, and had shown her his model.

"I think a few weeks will finish it," he said.

The earliest recollections of their one child centered themselves round the small room and its contents. It was the one touch of romance and mystery in their narrow, simple life. The few spare hours the struggle for daily bread left the man were spent there; sometimes he even stole hours from the night, and yet the end was always one step further. His frail body grew frailer, his gentle temperament more excitable, he was feverishly confident and utterly despairing by turns. It was in one of his hours of elation that his mind turned again to his old home. He was sure at last that a few days' work would complete all, and then only friends were needed.

"England is the place, after all," he said. "They are more steady there, even if they are not so sanguine,—and there are men in Lancashire I can rely upon. We'll try Old England once again."

The little money hard labor and scant living had laid away for an hour of need, they brought with them. Their son had remained to dispose of their few possessions. Between this son and the father there existed a strong affection, and Stephen Murdoch had done his best by him.

"I should like the lad," he used to say, "to have a fairer chance than I had. I want him to have what I have lacked."

As he lay upon the horse-hair sofa he spoke of him to his wife.

"There are not many like him," he said. "He'll make his way. I've sometimes thought that may-be——" But he did not finish the sentence; the words died away on his lips, and he lay perhaps thinking over them as he looked at the fire.

CHAPTER III.

"NOT FINISHED."

The next morning he went upon his journey, and a few days later the son came. He was a tall young fellow, with a dark, strongly cut face, deep-set black eyes and an unconventional air. Those who had been wont to watch his father, watched him in his turn with quite as much interest. He seemed to apply himself to the task of exploring the place at once. He went out a great deal and in all sorts of weather. He even presented himself at "Haworth's," and making friends with Floxham got permission to go through the place and look at the machinery. His simple directness of speech at once baffled and softened Floxham.

"My name's Murdoch," he said. "I'm an American and I'm interested in mechanics. If it isn't against your rules I should like to see your machinery."

Floxham pushed his cap off his forehead and looked him over.

"Well, I'm dom'd," he remarked.

It had struck him at first that this might be "cheek." And then he recognized that is was not.

Murdoch looked slightly bewildered.

"If there is any objection——" he began.

"Well, there is na," said Floxham. "Coom on in." And he cut the matter short by turning into the door.

"Did any 'o yo' chaps see that felly as coom to look at th' machinery?" He said afterward to his comrades. "He's fro' 'Merica, an' danged if he has na more head-fillin' than yo'd think fur. He goes round wi' his hands i' his pockits lookin' loike a foo', an' axin' questions as ud stump an owd un.

He's th' inventin' chap's lad. I dunnot go much wi' inventions mysen, but th' young chap's noan sich a foo' as he looks."

Between mother and son but little had been said on the subject which reigned supreme in the mind of each. It had never been their habit to speak freely on the matter. On the night of Hilary's arrival, as they sat together, the woman said:

"He went away three days ago. He will be back at the end of the week. He hoped to have good news for you."

They said little beyond this, but both sat silent for some time afterward, and the conversation became desultory and lagged somewhat until they separated for the night.

The week ended with fresh gusts of wind and heavy rains. Stephen Murdoch came home in a storm. On the day fixed for his return, his wife scarcely left her seat at the window for an hour. She sat looking out at the driving rain with a pale and rigid face; when the night fell and she rose to close the shutters, Hilary saw that her hands shook.

She made the small room as bright as possible, and set the evening meal upon the table, and then sat down and waited again by the fire, cowering a little over it, but not speaking.

"His being detained is not a bad sign," said Hilary.

Half an hour later they both started from their seats at once. There was a loud summons at the door. It was Hilary who opened it, his mother following closely.

A great gust of wind blew the rain in upon them, and Stephen Murdoch, wet and storm-beaten, stepped in from the outer darkness, carrying the wooden case in his hands.

He seemed scarcely to see them. He made his way past them and into the lighted room with an uncertain step. The light appeared to dazzle him. He went to the sofa weakly and threw himself upon it; he was trembling like a leaf; he had aged ten years.

"I—I——" And then he looked up at them as they stood before him waiting. "There is naught to say," he cried out, and burst into wild, hysterical weeping, like that of a woman.

In obedience to a sign from his mother, Hilary left the room. When, after the lapse of half an hour, he returned, all was quiet. His father lay upon the sofa with closed eyes, his mother sat near him. He did not rise nor touch food, and only spoke once during the evening. Then he opened his eyes and turned them upon the case which still stood where he had placed it.

"Take it away," he said in a whisper. "Take it away."

The next morning Hilary went to Floxham.

"I want work," he said. "Do you think I can get it here?"

"What soart does tha want?" asked the engineer, not too encouragingly. "Th' gentlemanly soart as tha con do wi' kid-gloves an' a eye-glass on?"

"No," answered Murdoch, "not that sort."

Floxham eyed him keenly.

"Would tha tak' owt as was offert thee?" he demanded.

"I think I would."

"Aw reet, then! I'll gie thee a chance. Coom tha wi' me to th' engine-room, an' see how long tha'lt stick to it."

It was very ordinary work he was given to do, but he seemed to take quite kindly to it; in fact, the manner in which he applied himself to the rough tasks which fell to his lot gave rise to no slight dissatisfaction among his fellow-workmen, and caused him to be regarded with small respect. He was usually a little ahead of the stipulated time, he had an equable temper, and yet despite this and his civility, he seemed often more than half oblivious of the existence of those around him. A highly flavored joke did not awaken him to enthusiasm, and perhaps chiefest among his failings was noted the fact that he had no predilection for "sixpenny," and at his midday meal, which he frequently brought with him and ate in any convenient

corner, he sat drinking cold water and eating his simple fare over a book.

"Th' chap is na more than haaf theer," was the opinion generally expressed.

Since the night of his return from his journey, Stephen Murdoch had been out no more. The neighbors watched for him in vain. The wooden case stood unopened in his room, —he had never spoken of it. Through the long hours of the day he lay upon the sofa, either dozing or in silent wakefulness, and at length instead of upon the sofa he lay upon the bed, not having strength to rise.

About three months after he had taken his place at Haworth's, Hilary came home one evening to find his mother waiting for him at the door. She shed no tears, there was in her face only a hopeless terror.

"He has sent me out of the room," she said. "He has been restless all day. He said he must be alone."

Hilary went upstairs. Opening the door he fell back a step. The model was in its old place on the work-table and near it stood a tall, gaunt, white figure.

His father turned toward him. He touched himself upon the breast. "I always told myself," he said, incoherently and hoarsely, "that there was a flaw in it—that something was lacking. I have said that for thirty years, and believed the day would come when I should remedy the wrong. To-night I *know*. The truth has come to me at last. There was no remedy. The flaw was in me," touching his hollow chest, —"in *me*. As I lay there I thought once that perhaps it was not real—that I had dreamed it all and might awake. I got up to see—to touch it. It is there! Good God!" as if a sudden terror grasped him. "Not finished!—and I——"

He fell into a chair and sank forward, his hand falling upon the model helplessly and unmeaningly.

Hilary raised him and laid his head upon his shoulder. He heard his mother at the door and cried out loudly to her.

"Go back!" he said. "Go back! You must not come in."

CHAPTER IV.

JANEY BRIARLEY

A week later Hilary Murdoch returned from the Broxton grave-yard in a drizzling rain, and made his way to the bare, cleanly swept chamber upstairs.

Since the night on which he had cried out to his mother that she must not enter, the table at which the dead man had been wont to sit at work had been pushed aside. Some one had thrown a white cloth over it. Murdoch went to it and drew this cloth away. He stood and looked down at the little skeleton of wood and steel. It had been nothing but a curse from first to last, and yet it fascinated him. He found it hard to do the thing he had come to do.

"It is not finished," he said to the echoes of the empty room. "It—never will be."

He slowly replaced it in its case, and buried it out of sight at the bottom of the trunk which, from that day forward, would stand unused and locked.

When he arose, after doing this, he unconsciously struck his hands together as he had seen grave-diggers do when they brushed the damp soil away.

The first time Haworth saw his new hand he regarded him with small favor. In crossing the yard one day at noon, he came upon him disposing of his midday meal and reading at the same time. He stopped to look at him.

"Who's that?" he asked one of the men.

The fellow grinned in amiable appreciation of the rough tone of the query.

"That's th' 'Merican," he answered. "An' a soft un he is."

"What's that he's reading?"

"Summat about engineering loike as not. That's his crank."

In the rush of his new plans and the hurry of the last few months, Haworth had had time to forget the man who had wished him "good luck," and whose pathetic figure had been a shadow upon the first glow of his triumph. He did not connect him at all with the young fellow before him. He turned away with a shrug of his burly shoulders.

"He doesn't look like an Englishman," he said. "He hasn't got backbone enough."

Afterward when the two accidentally came in contact, Haworth wasted few civil words. At times his domineering brusqueness excited Murdoch to wonder.

"He's a queer fellow, that Haworth," he said reflectingly to Floxham. "Sometimes I think he's out of humor with me."

With the twelve-year-old daughter of one of the workmen, who used to bring her father's dinner, the young fellow had struck up something of a friendship. She was the eldest of twelve, a mature young person, whose business-like air had attracted him.

She had assisted her mother in the rearing of her family from her third year, and had apparently done with the follies of youth. She was stunted with much nursing and her small face had a shrewd and careworn look. Murdoch's first advances she received with some distrust, but after a lapse of time they progressed fairly and, without any weak sentiment, were upon excellent terms.

One rainy day she came into the yard enveloped in a large shawl, evidently her mother's, and also evidently very much in her way. Her dinner-can, her beer-jug, and her shawl were more than she could manage.

"Eh! I *am* in a mess," she said to Hilary, stopping at the door-way with a long-drawn breath. "I duunot know which way to turn—what wi' th' beer and what wi' th' dinner. I've getten on mother's Sunday shawl as she had afore she wur wed, an' th' eends keep a-draggin' an' a-draggin', an' th'

mud'll be th' ruin on em. Th' pin mother put in is na big enow, an' it's getten loose."

There was perhaps not much sense of humor in the young man. He did not seem to see the grotesqueness of the little figure with its mud-bedraggled maternal wrappings. He turned up the lapel of his coat and examined it quite seriously.

"I've got a pin here that will hold it," he said. "I picked it up because it was such a large one."

Jariey Briarley's eyes brightened.

"Eh!" she ejaculated, "that theer's a graidely big un. Some woman mun ha' dropped it out o' her shawl. Wheer did tha foind it?"

"In the street."

"I thowt so. Some woman's lost it. Dost tha think tha con pin it reet, or mun I put th' beer down an' do it mysen?"

He thought he could do it and bent down to reach her level.

It was at this moment that Haworth approached the door with the intention of passing out. Things had gone wrong with him, and he was in one of his worst moods. He strode down the passage in a savage hurry, and, finding his way barred, made no effort to keep his temper.

"Get out of the road," he said, and pushed Murdoch aside slightly with his foot.

It was as if he had dropped a spark of fire into gunpowder. Murdoch sprang to his feet, white with wrath and quivering.

"D——n you!" he shrieked. "D——n you! I'll kill you!" and he rushed upon him.

As he sprang upon him, Haworth staggered between the shock and his amazement. A sense of the true nature of the thing he had done broke in upon him.

When it was all over he fell back a pace, and a grim surprise, not without its hint of satisfaction, was in his face.

"The devil take you," he said. "You *have* got some blood in you, after all."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP.

The next morning, when he appeared at the Works, Murdoch found he had to make his way through a group of the "hands" which some sufficiently powerful motive had gathered together,—which group greeted his appearance with signs of interest. "Theer he is," he heard them say. And then a gentleman of leisure, who was an outsider leaning against the wall, enjoying the solace of a short pipe, exerted himself to look round and add his comment.

"Well," he remarked, "he may ha' done it, an' I wunnot stick out as he did na; but if it wur na fur the circumstantial evidence I would na ha' believed it."

Floxham met him at the entrance with a message.

"Haworth's sent fur thee," he said.

"Where is he?"—coolly enough under the circumstances.

The engineer chuckled in sly exultation.

"He's in the office. He didna say nowt about givin' thee th' bag; but tha may as well mak' up thy moind to it. Tha wert pretty cheeky, tha knows, considerin' he wur th' mester."

"Look here," with some heat; "do you mean to say you think I was in the wrong? Am I to let the fellow insult me and not resent it—touch me with his foot, as if I were a dog?"

"Tha'rt particular, my lad," dryly. "An' tha does na know as much o' th' mester koind as most folk." But the next instant he flung down the tool he held in his hand. "Dom thee!" he cried. "I loike thy pluck. Stick to it, lad,—mesters or no mesters."

As Murdoch crossed the threshold of his room, Jem Haworth turned in his seat and greeted him with a short nod not altogether combative. Then he leaned forward, with his arms upon the table before him.

"Sit down," he said. "I'd like to take a look at the chap who thought he could thrash Jem Haworth."

But Murdoch did not obey him.

"I suppose you have something to say to me," he said, "as you sent for me."

He did not receive the answer he was prepared for. Jem Haworth burst into a loud laugh.

"By George! you're a plucky chap," he said, "if you are an American."

Murdoch's blood rose again.

"Say what you have to say," he demanded. "I can guess what it is; but, let me tell you, I should do the same thing again. It was no fault of mine that I was in your path——"

"If I'd been such a fool as not to see that," put in Haworth, with a smile grimmer than before, "do you think I couldn't have smashed every bone in your body?"

Then Murdoch comprehended how matters were to stand between them.

"Getten th' bag?" asked Floxham when he went back to his work.

"No."

"Tha hannot?" with animation. "Well, dang *me!*"

At the close of the day, as they were preparing to leave their work, Haworth presented himself in the engine-room, looking perhaps a trifle awkward.

"See here," he said to Murdoch, "I've heard something to-day as I've missed hearing before, somehow. The inventing chap was your father?"

"Yes."

He stood in an uneasy attitude, looking out of the window as if he half expected to see the frail, tall figure again.